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Message Text

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67
ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05

PC-01 OPR-02 DHA-02 SCCT-01 SY-05 SSO-00 /073 W
---------- 104761
R 021840Z AUG 76
FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1769
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN SALVADOR 3500

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, PORS, ES
SUBJECT: PROTEST MARCH HELD - NO INCIDENTS

REF: SAN SALVADOR 3470

1. THE JULY 30 COMMEMORATIVE PROTEST MARCH, MARKING THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF A PARADE LAST YEAR WHICH RESULTED IN THE DEATHS OF UP TO A DOZEN STUDENT PARTICIPANTS, WAS HELD AS SCHEDULED WITH A NOTABLE LACK OF TURBULENCE AND NO SERIOUS INCIDENTS. (FOR BACKGROUND, SEE REFTEL). TWO CONTIGENTS OF UNIVERSITY BASED MARCHERS PASSED THE EMBASSY,PERHAPS 500 IN TOTAL, ON THEIR WAY TO THE MEMORIAL SITE. PASSING IN MINUTES, THEY PAID NO ATTENTION TO THE EMBASSY AND INFLICTED NO DAMAGE.
2. CONTRARY TO EMBASSY EXPECTATIONS, THE GROUP THAT ASSEMBLED NEAR THE SITE OF LAST YEAR'S CONFRONTATION WAS QUITE LARGE (ESTIMATED 7-10 THOUSAND), AND WAS COMPOSED OF A GOOD MIX OF STUDENTS, ORGANIZED LABOR, CAMPESINOS, OPPOSITION POLITICAL PARTY MEMBERS AND OTHERS. UNIFORMED SECURITY FORCES WERE NOWHERE TO BE SEEN, ALTHOUGH WE WERE TOLD THERE WERE A NUMBER OF THEM MIXED IN WITH THE MARCH. THE CROWD WAS WELL DISCIPLINED, AND ORGANIZED. A COMMEMORATIVE
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PLAQUE AND A DOZEN FLORAL WREATHS WERE PLUFDD AT THE SITE

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OF THE CLASH. THE MARCH THROUGH DOWNTOWN TO THE NATIONAL CATHEDRAL, AND FOLLOW-ON SPEECHES THERE AND IN THE PARQUE LIBERTAD, LASTED THROUGHOUT THE AFTERNOON AND EVENING. AT THE END EVERYONE SIMPLY WENT HOME.

3. COMMENT. ALTHOUGH THE MARCH WAS CONSIDERABLY LARGER, BROADER BASED, AND BETTER COORDINATED THAN WE EXPECTED IT WOULD BE (PARTICULARLY CONSIDERING THE INTERNALH ONFLICTS AMONG ITS ORGANIZERS), THE GOVERNMENT'S REFUSAL TO BE "PROVOKED" INTO CONFRONTATION, AND THE LACK OF MISCHIEVIOUS INTENT ON THE PART OF THE MARCHERS, PRODUCED A HAPPENING THAT, WHILE IMPRESSIVE IN SIZE, WAS ESSENTIALLY A NON-EVENT. THE STUDENTS AND THEIR ALLIES NEVERTHELESS WERE ABLE TO LET OFF STEAM, FOCUS A BIT OF ATTENTION ON THE "MARTYRS" OF LAST JULY, AND REMIND EVERYONE OF THEIR CONTINUED EXISTENCE AND OPPOSITION. IT IS EXPECTED THATNB LY WILL TRY TO MAKE A JULY 30 MARCH AN ANNUAL EVENT.

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